



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY FOR
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
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Summary of Key Points and Recommendations

1. Raise awareness amongst preparedness planners of the changing demographics of Connecticut Communities; and the implications of those changes for emergency preparedness. Just as there are many more large trees in Connecticut than there were in 1985, when Hurricane Gloria hit, there are many more people with access and functional needs living independently and/or “aging in place” in Connecticut Communities than was the case in 1985.
2. Clarify the legal responsibility of all levels of government to ensure that people with access and functional needs are included in preparedness planning, and are not treated as “patients”, are not thought of as a separate, “special needs” group, or seen as someone else’s responsibility. Good material and training opportunities are available on this – let’s use them.
3. Identify and conduct thorough surveys of potential congregate shelter locations to ensure they can meet (or can be temporarily set up to meet) the access and functional support needs of the communities they will be serving. Emergency managers and shelter staff should also receive specific training on access and functional needs. Superficial or dated shelter checklists and training curricula are insufficient for this task. However, resources do exist that can assist municipalities and planning regions to conduct shelter surveys, and assure that people are trained in the competencies needed for inclusion – there is no need to reinvent these resources. What is needed is a clear understanding that these are basic, imperative steps that must be taken. The following links will help:

Emergency Shelter Accessibility Checklist

An Assessment Tool for

Emergency Management Staff and Volunteers

www.ct.gov/opap/lib/opap/documents/adobe/emg_shelter_accessibility_checklist.pdf

Guidance on Planning for Integration of Functional Needs Support Services in General Population Shelters *November 2010*

http://www.fema.gov/pdf/about/odc/fnss_guidance.pdf

Planning for the Whole Community

Integrating and Coordinating the Access and Functional Needs of Children and Adults with Disabilities in Preparedness, Response, Recovery and Mitigation. April 2011

http://www.fema.gov/pdf/about/odc/all_hands_0411.pdf

4. Improve communication and support strategies for “shelter-in-place” scenarios. Many of the weather/industrial/pandemic/terrorist events likely to affect Connecticut will involve sheltering in place rather than evacuation and mass sheltering. It is especially important to recognize that the dimension of time – the duration of an event and the time of year – has a significant impact on the needs of those sheltering in their own homes. To date, too little attention has been paid to this area.
5. Ensure that warning communications are transmitted in multiple formats and by multiple means. (E.G. Televised warnings and instructions should be both interpreted by sign language interpreters, and closed captioned; web-based material should be formatted so that screen readers can read it.)
6. Involve human service agencies (private as well as public), VNAs, home health agencies, equipment vendors, and disability organizations in municipal and regional preparedness planning and exercises. These agencies are community-based; have access to knowledgeable, experienced people; are able to access equipment, supplies and vehicles; and often know many of the individuals within particular communities who will need support to maintain their successful functioning. They are important resources. Many are also required to, or do have their own disaster plans, but are not included in municipal or regional planning or training exercises. The best way to ensure coordination is to involve them in drills and exercises.
7. Develop a uniform, coordinated, one-stop “pre- registration” system that include all possible emergency services and notification mechanisms. The goal should be to end the fragmentation across jurisdictions and confusion of multiple, uncoordinated appeals to sign up for this or that notification system, utility listing, etc., and give people a simple, clear, step-by-step process to follow across all jurisdictions.
8. Re-think personal preparedness messages and provide more detailed information about developing personal disaster plans. People should be encouraged to think about having plans “A”, “B” and “C”, rather than just having “a plan”.